[fic+art] Death Comes for Us All

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[fic+art] Death Comes for Us All

by lumosatnight

Summary

Burying his face in Draco's hair, he can smell the smoke from the cigarette, can taste the ashes lingering in his mouth. Harry finds it comforting, a reminder that Draco has seen his worst and still chooses to stay.

Notes

Thank you to the lovely mods for running this amazing fest! It was such a joy collaborating on this angsty little piece. The art was so moody and atmospheric, I immediately knew I wanted to write something for it. Thank you CBG for being the overall best alpha, beta, cheerleader, and fandom friend 💕💕. You are a gem, I hope you know that.

Fic by lumosatnight
Art by JuliusTwo

For more about the *Minor Character Death* and *Murder* tags mentioned, click to expand the toggle below.

▶ **WARNING FOR FIC SPOILERS!!**

See the end of the work for more notes

- Inspired by Death Comes for Us All [Artwork] by JuliusTwo

~ Present Day ~

Tick.

The watch on the nightstand sits just out of reach, each agonising second reverberating off the peeling wallpaper and mottled floorboards. He can feel sweat pooling in his armpits, legs tangled helplessly in damp sheets. The summer has never been hotter, and he wishes desperately for a Cooling Charm. Or if not that, then a bag of ice would do just as well.

Tick.

Harry stares up at the slanted ceiling, rings of ash staining it a dark grey. He wonders what colour it used to be—maybe a pleasant cream or perhaps an innocent light blue. If he wipes a hand through it, he wonders if it will dissolve, specks falling helplessly and coating his hand in ash, or if it has already solidified into an impermeable layer—an unwavering, resilient mass. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, after all.

Tick.

He swings his legs off the bed, careful not to disturb the body beside him, and pads out into the dark hallway. Though his tread is light, the floor still creaks under the weight of each step. There used to be a carpet stretching the length of the long hallway; however, Hermione removed it after tripping over a frayed corner while bringing in the groceries one evening. Harry doesn't mind either way, although he does sometimes miss the feel of soft fur between his toes instead of the rough caress of splintering wood. He steps carefully down the hall, pausing in front of Hermione's room and taking a peek inside.

Hermione's door is cracked ajar, her reading lamp casting a faded yellow triangle into the hallway and illuminating Harry's bare chest. As usual, she is hunched in the corner bent over a wobbly desk, pen scribbling furiously across scattered papers, her mouth opening and closing in rhythmic movements.

If Harry were to approach her, he would hear the nonsensical stream of spells, incantations, *curses* falling from her lips. It is all part of her endless research. They each have found their own way to cope with the pain, and this is Hermione's.

As he continues watching, she combs a hand through her hair, sending the dark ringlets every which way. Harry knows better than to interrupt her when she is in one of her researching moods, even if they are gradually becoming more and more common these days. If, in two days' time, when the sun breaks the horizon, he comes back and does not find her passed out over the desk, he will surreptitiously slip a drop of Sleeping Draught into her daily dose of tea. It would not be the first time.

After quietly closing the door, Harry finishes his tread down the hall and reaches the bathroom. Dark and gritty with a single window shadowed by worn curtains, it is Harry's favourite place to be in their small Muggle flat. He has always felt comfortable in confined spaces: first the cupboard, then his four-poster, and now this dingy bathroom.

He splashes a handful of cool water over his face. It feels so good he splashes his neck too, washing the layer of sweat away.

Squinting into the mirror, he fumbles around for where he set his glasses on the edge of the sink. His figure is blurry, just a hazy outline of browns and blacks. He has always felt vulnerable like this—a waiting target, too exposed with one of his senses cut off. It is the same feeling of the past few years, the feeling of missing a limb, of missing a part of him so integral that it leaves a gaping hole when it is gone.

He remembers when the limb was severed from the whole.

~ August 1997 ~

“Hermione,” Ron whispers. A rasping cough shakes through his lanky frame, blood dribbling down his chin and staining his dress robes.

“No,” Hermione pleads, “no, Ron, no, you can't.” Her shoulders shake as she cradles Ron's bloodied face in her hands.

“Hermione, I'm sorry.”

Tears drop from Hermione’s eyes, smearing her makeup, but she wipes them away, uncaring.

Harry kneels on Ron's other side, taking his hand and surreptitiously watching the entrance to the dark alley. It would not do to be caught in such a compromising position.

With the last vestiges of strength, Ron tilts his head and gazes up at Harry. “Harry, please.”

That is all he says, and yet, Harry understands him perfectly. Harry squeezes his hand and holds his eye as he gives a sharp nod. Ron's body instantly relaxes, shoulders slumping and head lolling back.

“RON!” Hermione screams. “Ron, please! Ron, RON!” She clutches at his robes, shaking him with painful force.

Harry casts a Silencing Charm on the alley and waits as she sobs. He, himself, feels numb, the entirety of the last few hours blurring together like a dream. Bill and Fleur's wedding, Kingsley's Patronus, Ron jumping in front of a Dark curse meant for Hermione, the look in Ginny's eyes as they Disapparated, full of fiery determination and anguish.

It is all a shapeless blur.

When a scuffle breaks out at the entrance to the alley, Harry forcefully grabs Hermione under the arm and pulls her upright. “We need to go. It isn't safe here.” The new group does not look magical, but he holds his wand close just in case.

“We can't just leave him here.” Hermione wipes her nose on her sleeve, but otherwise manages to compose herself.

“And we won't.” He raises his wand in the air, sending out a shower of red sparks before Disapparating, Hermione clinging to his side.

The Ministry will find the body and notify the rest of Ron's family.

That is, if there are any Weasleys left to tell.

~ Present Day ~

Harry is rummaging through the cabinet under the sink when Draco finds him.

"They're not there," he says, nothing but a dark figure silhouetted in the doorway, all long limbs and sharp angles, poking and prodding. His hair is ghostly white and getting longer by the day. Harry used to tease him about it, much to Draco's extreme annoyance. Now, Draco barely bats an eye.

"You're lying," says Harry. He closes a clammy hand around the box, retrieving it, and straightens up until he and Draco are the same height again.

Draco frowns. "I threw them out."

"Not all of them."

Harry lights a cigarette with the Muggle lighter he hid under the kitchen floorboards and takes a deep breath. Draco stares at him impassively, the moment lingering—twisting and growing. Harry holds his breath, holding the moment and the smoke inside.

It is not the nicotine or the high—that is not why Harry smokes. It is the movement of it. Stretching his lungs to their natural limits. His hands and fingers—always restless, always sure—given a purpose, a constant need for attention. It helps keep him occupied on sleepless nights such as these.

"You better open the window before Hermione finds out," Draco says finally.

Harry coughs, the smoke escaping and flooding the small bathroom. Draco gives him an unimpressed scowl.

"Cheers," he says, and opens the small window.

His back slides down the wall, sweat-slicked skin sliding against cool tile, and his bum hits the floor. Draco crosses the bathroom in two short strides and pulls back the curtain, the yellow streetlight giving his face an almost sickly sheen. The streets are usually empty around this hour, only the occasional beggar or drunkard wandering by, and yet, Draco checks every single time.

Tilting his head back against the wall, Harry watches the way Draco's shirt rides up revealing a band of pale stomach, a loose-fitted shirt with the Weird Sisters' logo splayed across the front. He thinks the T-shirt might be his.

"See anyone?" Harry says, bringing the cigarette to his lips and inhaling deeply.

Draco shakes his head. "Only Mr Simmons and his mutt. He's probably on a bender again."

"Just as well, then." Harry exhales in a loud breath.

Draco settles on the ground beside him, bare legs stretching out and tangling in Harry's own.

The bathroom may be functional with working water and even a mirror to appease Draco's vanity, but it is dreadfully small, Harry being able to reach from one end to the other with barely any effort. He tries to scoot away to give Draco and his long legs more room, but Draco grabs his arm and tugs sharply.

"I'm fine."

"Alright," Harry replies. He brings his knees to his chest, circling an arm around them. Harry has always been like this—trying to take up the least amount of space as possible, always hoping to pass by unnoticed.

Draco is the opposite.

Everywhere he goes, heads turn, gossip starts. Draco revels in it, treats every room he is in as if he owns it. Even now, in their unassuming little bathroom, he lounges like a prince, legs spread as if daring anyone to challenge his claim.

It was difficult in the beginning for him to learn how to hide, but with time, he has learned how to blend in, how to step instead of swagger, how to smile politely instead of sneer. Draco is calmer now, a bit more contemplative, a lot more clear. Harry likes this version of Draco better even if he does not like the events that caused him to be this way.

Image Description: Draco and Harry are sitting in a small room with tiled walls. Harry is only in his pants while smoking a cigarette, and Draco is sitting across from him in a Weird Sisters T-shirt and pants. There is a window behind them shining in light. End description.

“Do you remember the first time we did this?” Draco’s head is turned away, watching the cloud of smoke Harry releases into the night.

“‘Course.”

“I tried to curse you when you found me.”

Harry huffs, amused. “It almost landed too.”

The corner of Draco’s lips quirk. “Hermione would have had my head.”

There is no doubt that she would have exacted revenge tenfold. Ever since losing Ron, her protectiveness over Harry has only increased. With her new repertoire of spells and hexes, even the Death Eaters are fearful of the business side of her wand.

Draco tilts his head, chords in his neck drawing Harry’s wandering eye. “I’m glad you found me,” he says.

Harry releases another puff of smoke, watches it curl in the air and float leisurely out the window.

“I will always find you.”

And he will, just like he did that first time.

~ May 1998 ~

Harry has not seen Draco in days.

After their narrow escape from Malfoy Manor, Draco disappeared into the crevices of the abandoned Muggle building Hermione found and warded and has not shown his face since.

Hermione says not to worry, that the wound in Draco’s side from Bellatrix’s knife will heal, that she does not understand why Harry insists on dragging him with them.

“He cannot be trusted.”

“He *saved* us. He almost *died.”*

“Maybe he should have.”

Harry gets it. He really does. Trust is hard to come by these days, a luxury meant for simpler times. They trusted Kreacher to keep their location safe at Grimmauld Place, and what did he do? Delivered them right into Narcissa Malfoy’s manicured hands. It was only Draco’s fortunate timing and access to the Manor’s wards that allowed them to escape.

Even still, they did not make it out unscathed. Luna, Dean, and Mr Ollivander did not make it at all, Bellatrix’s wand slashing through them with brutal efficiency. Even Narcissa Malfoy, with her cat-like claws and sharp-witted tongue, was no match for her sister.

Harry finds Draco on the fire escape, trouser-clad legs dangling off the side.

“Hey—” he starts to say, but a blue curse flies towards his head, and he dodges just in time.

Draco’s face is red and blotchy, eyelids swollen and hair mussed. He does not lower his wand—his mother’s wand—as Harry approaches.

“Hermione says we shouldn’t use magic. Messes with the wards.” He raises both hands in the air, keeping his wand sheathed. Somehow, he knows Draco will not dare curse him again. “And,

erm, I just—I wanted to make sure you hadn't left."

"Where would I go?"

Harry shrugs. *Anywhere but here,* he wants to say, but he is too afraid Draco will actually listen this time. He goes to sit beside him, their shoulders almost touching, and filches a nearly-empty box of cigarettes from somewhere in his pockets.

"Did you want one?"

Draco glances at them, then away. "Father says it's a disgusting Muggle habit. He—" Draco swallows. "Nevermind."

"I'm sorry," Harry says because he is. Lucius Malfoy may have been a bastard, but he is the reason they were able to escape the Manor in the end. Without his last-minute change of heart, pointedly looking the other way as Draco released them from their cells, he and Hermione would have been worse than dead.

"Whatever, Potter."

Harry takes a pull from the cigarette, tapping it lightly against the metal railing and watching the ashes fall from the tip. They must be at least ten stories high, everyone down below looking small and insignificant. From this height, he can imagine it is just them against the world.

"Why did you find me? Why do you care?" Draco's voice is rough and scratchy. He still cannot look Harry in the eyes.

"I don't know."

"You could have just let me die after you escaped. Why didn't you?"

"I don't know."

That is the truth, even if Draco does not want to hear it.

London hums around them—buzzing streetlights, cars honking in the distance. A flock of birds burst from a nearby clothing line. To Harry it is familiar, almost calming. He often spent summer nights wandering the city, avoiding the Dursleys as much as possible. But, he supposes, for Draco, it may be overwhelming.

Harry is starting his second cigarette when Draco takes a deep breath, steeling himself for something, something momentous.

"I don't…" His voice wobbles. "I'm not *good.* I've done things. Horrible, terrible things. I—"

"Do you wish you hadn't?"

"Well… yes."

Harry blows out a cloud of smoke. "Then, it's alright. We've all done things we wish we hadn't."

“Potter, you don’t understand. I’ve *killed* people.”

“So have I.” Harry leans forward, resting his head between the bars, cold metal pressing into his cheek. “The first time I killed someone, I was eleven. All I had to do was touch him, and he died.”

Out of the corner of his eye, he sees Draco’s hand inch toward him as if to grasp him and cling onto the pain still evident in Harry’s voice all these years later. But then, at the last second, he lets it fall, clenching it in his lap instead. There is a furrow between Draco’s pale brows that Harry wants to inexplicably reach out and smooth away. Maybe someday.

“Who was it?” Draco says at last.

“Quirrell.”

Draco’s spine stiffens. “Potter, you cannot be serious. If this is some kind of perverted joke, I assure you it is not funny.”

Harry stubs out the cigarette. “Not a joke,” he says, though he wishes it were. “It’s all true. It was me, at the end of our first-year. I killed Quirrell. Professor Dumbledore said it was in self-defence, but it doesn’t matter. I killed him. I am responsible for taking someone’s life, and I’ve only taken more since.”

Draco does not say anything for a while, and when he does, his voice is low, a barely-there whisper.

“I killed them… the Muggles. Father, he—he took me on one of the raids. I didn’t realise at first that I hit them. I was just trying to stay out of sight, away from Aunt Bella, but I… my hex hit them. And they died. She said she was proud of me.”

“And your father, what did he say?”

Draco curls in on himself, the crown of his head barely visible among the layers of doubt and regret, so different from the spoiled prince who pranced about the Hogwarts corridors.

“He said—he said I did what I had to do to survive.”

“I’m sorry,” says Harry.

Draco does not say anything in response. They spend the rest of the night in silence, simply sitting, simply waiting, their hands drifting gradually closer on the grate.

The Dursleys watched a movie once, after Dudley was tucked into bed (“snug as a bug in a rug”) and Harry locked into his cupboard (“where freaks like you belong”). Vernon never cared that the blaring television could be heard from Harry’s cupboard. In the movie, there was a man, the ‘right’ sort of man—strong and handsome and brave. He was hanging off the side of a cliff, trapped between the unyielding rocks with no way to escape.

Harry remembers this man. He remembers his screams, his prayers to an invisible god. He remembers the sound of a knife cutting through bone as the man cut his own hand off to escape.

He remembers Aunt Petunia's whimpers, her scolding Uncle Vernon for "choosing such a grotesque movie to watch", and Vernon laughing in that boastful way he did.

But most of all, Harry remembers what the movie taught him. *Sacrifices must be made to survive.* It took him many years, but now he understands.

The next day, Draco approaches Hermione and says he wants to make an Unbreakable Vow. Hermione is surprised, but allows it. By the time the mid-day sun shows her rosy cheeks, Draco has pledged his allegiance to Harry. He promises to follow him, to protect him, to throw himself upon the blade should the need arise.

Harry wonders what other sacrifices must be made to survive.

~ Present Day ~

As they always do, they find themselves back in the bedroom, the cigarette extinguished, the sparks between them burning brighter than any flame ever could.

Draco's forehead is beaded with sweat, his eyes slitted from arousal. The sheets are nowhere in sight, pushed off the side and tangled on the floor. The room is dark except for a beam of moonlight falling across Draco's face as he lays back.

As Harry slides inside, Draco's white brows pinch together. Harry leans over to kiss them, right between the pucker.

"Harry," Draco says, voice nothing but a low moan. They never use Silencing Spells; it is too dangerous in case of unexpected attacks. Unfortunately, that means Hermione can also hear everything that goes on in the dead of night.

Harry laces their fingers together, pinning them on either side of Draco's head. This is the best part, Harry thinks. The closeness, the feeling of being surrounded by Draco, every inch of their bodies touching. The feeling of being inside him—warm and wet and welcoming— *always*.

"Yes, Harry, yes." Draco's eyes flutter closed, and he throws his head back, uncombed hair splaying across the moonlit pillowcase.

Harry makes sure to hit Draco's prostate on each thrust, rocking their bodies together in a languid rhythm. If he could, he would stay like this all night, keeping their bodies connected, only letting Draco come when the first rays of sunlight beckoned in a new day. However, Draco is much too impatient for that, and neither of them want to deal with an angry Hermione again.

"Faster. Go faster," Draco orders; he never pleads. Even in the throes of passion, he is still bossy as all hell, always expecting to get his way.

Harry slows his pace just to be contrary, and Draco releases a huff of frustration.

Long nails grab at Harry's shoulders, making his breath catch. Draco digs his heels into the small of his back, forcing their sweaty bodies even closer. Harry would be afraid of smothering him if he did not already know that is exactly what Draco wants.

He settles all of his weight over Draco's long lean form, Draco's hard cock rutting in the cramped space between their stomachs.

Burying his face in Draco's hair, he can smell the smoke from the cigarette, can taste the ashes lingering in his mouth. Harry finds it comforting, a reminder that Draco has seen his worst and still chooses to stay. Gradually, his body relaxes and he lets the pleasure overwhelm him, lets Draco's soft moans fill the cracks in his heart and push everything else from his mind.

He lets Draco's moans block out the memories of her screams.

~ September 1999 ~

"Harry."

"Fuck, fuck, fuck. I shouldn't have—I didn't mean to go that far—"

"Harry," Draco says again, more urgently. "Harry, stop. Please, stop."

But Harry cannot stop, cannot control it.

Panic is bubbling in his chest, simmering in his lungs and making it hard to breathe. The world is spinning, hazy and inconsistent, the sound of Bellatrix's screams ringing in his ears.

It was supposed to be simple. It was supposed to be fast.

Get the cup and get out.

Hermione laid out a ten step plan—disguises, back exits, the whole shebang. They did not expect Bellatrix's sudden arrival, sulphurous and sharp. They did not expect Harry's reaction to seeing Sirius's murderer in the flesh, this time gripping his wand.

The Fiendfyre ripped from his core without thought.

Fiendfyre: the last resort for destroying Slytherin's locket when all else failed. It took him *weeks* to learn it, to control it, Hermione always grabbing his arm, ready to Disapparate at a moment's notice. Harry could barely light a candle without being swept away by the pure power of it.

But now, the flames raged without hesitation, without discrimination. Bellatrix and the cup were lost to them within seconds, their screams the only part remaining and burrowing far into Harry's ears.

What they do not teach in school is that fire takes a long time to burn. It takes even longer to destroy.

Regular fire is dangerous, but easy enough to survive if given the chance. Fiendfyre will take all chances and suffocate them in smoke. It will trap, and it will take. And take and take and take. Until there is nothing left but a burnt and blackened shell. It will form an impenetrable barrier, lengthen each searing caress, feed on fear and screams and prayers of despair.

Bellatrix was trapped by the fire, but she did not die. Not right away. Not all of her.

She lived for minutes, hours, lifetimes, her body being eaten away piece by piece, inch by blackened inch. She took her last breath as the dragon rose into the sky.

But she did not die, not all of her.

She lives in Harry's memories, screaming and screaming, pleading and threatening. She screams so loudly, she is the only thing Harry hears. His ears ring with it, the volume turned up too high.

"Fuck. I shouldn't—I didn't—"

"Harry, you need to calm down."

His hands are shaking; the room is shaking. His chest feels too tight.

"Harry, look at me. Focus on me. Tell me, tell me what you see."

Draco pries his hands away from his ears, kneels down on the floor until they are the same height.

"Harry, tell me. What do you see? What do you feel?"

He sees Draco.

Draco is there as he always is, sharp and aware and alight. Draco, with his moon-white hair and his ice-cool eyes. Draco, who vowed to stay by Harry's side—through thick or through thin. Who promised not to let Harry fall.

He latches onto the collar of Draco's shirt and yanks, pulling both of them forward and toppling to the floor. Draco ends up hovering above him, hands bracketing Harry's head on the cool tile. Their faces are so close, he can see Draco's eyelashes, soft and blond. He can see the pimple on Draco's nose.

"Harry," Draco says. A question. A warning.

Then, Harry's lips are on him, kissing anywhere he can reach. He pulls Draco down, feeling his warm, alive— *alive! So alive!* —body settle on top of him. He wants to feel all of him; he wants to get lost in him.

"Harry." Draco tries to pull back, but Harry clutches him closer.

If Draco leaves him now, he knows his insides will shatter, will break into a thousand grief-edged shards. They will embed themselves under his skin, hollow out his innards so that he will be forever coughing up glass-sharp memories. If Draco leaves, he does not know how he will survive.

Harry covers Draco's mouth with his own, silencing Draco's protests and eliciting a gasping sort of moan.

At first, Draco is still, simply allowing Harry to touch, to take what he needs. It is not until Harry moves his hands to grip Draco's arse that he moves. A dam breaks, the cup of tainted

desire finally overflowing. Draco pants into his mouth, allowing Harry's tongue to slide inside. He thrusts his hips down, covering Harry's body like a long, lean blanket, heavy and secure.

They rut on the ground in the middle of the bathroom floor. Clothes are peeled away; a hasty Muffliato Charm is thrown against the door.

Harry smooths his hands down the hard planes of Draco's front. Hiding out has made them hard. Less food, always on edge, always on the run. There is no room for inactivity, only for necessity. He presses a kiss to the centre of Draco's sternum.

Draco spits into his hand, reaches between their stomachs to grab both their cocks and rub them together.

All it takes is a few messy strokes, and Harry is breaking free. He is soaring so high he thinks he may never land again. His body shakes with it, or maybe it is Draco who is shaking, still bracketing Harry with his long arms and long body.

Afterwards, Draco holds him. Just lies there and holds him. He does not say anything, does not move.

Harry listens to his even breaths.

In… Out… In… Out…

The door slams open, Hermione standing in the doorway, frantic and desperate. She does not comment on the state the two of them are in, naked and intertwined on the bathroom floor.

"No Silencing Spells," she says. "I thought you were gone… I thought someone had taken… I thought…" Her eyes are red, but no tears escape. She has already lost so many, there are none left to shed.

"Okay," Draco responds.

"Okay," Harry says, because he finally feels like he is.

In Draco's arms, he feels calm. In Draco's arms, he feels okay to be alive.

~ Present Day ~

Harry slumps back on the bed, one arm flung across his sweaty forehead, the other wrapped around Draco's waist. Draco curls into him, his slow breaths tickling Harry's chest and matching the beating of his heart. Draco's hand drags up his neck, pauses to caress an unshaven cheek, and settles in Harry's hair, gently stroking. The feeling is foreign and familiar at the same time. Aunt Petunia never touched Harry's hair unless it was to attack it with a comb. It feels like he is loved.

"Do you ever think about death?" Harry says. His voice sounds loud in the room's tranquil silence.

Draco's fingers pause. "No."

“Never?”

“Never.”

“It’s inevitable, isn’t it? You can’t run from it, can’t hide from it. Death comes for us all in the end.”

Draco lifts his head from Harry’s chest. The redness of his cheeks, caused by their earlier activities, has dulled, leaving them listless and calm. “Does it, really?” he says. His eyes bore into Harry’s—like he is trying to scan the very edges of Harry’s fractured soul.

“Everyone dies.” Harry shrugs.

Draco turns his head away and lays back down, ear pressed against Harry’s heart. “Not everyone.”

~ July 2000~

Harry’s twentieth birthday is one of little fanfare.

Or at least, it should have been.

One gift. One wish. One mistake.

“I want to see my parents,” Harry said on the eve of his twentieth birthday.

“It will be difficult,” stated Hermione.

“It could be a trap,” Draco warned him.

They went anyway. To Godric’s Hollow. To lay a wreath of summer flowers on a pair of autumn graves.

One mistake. One regret. One selfless act.

Nagini slythers head-first out of Bathilda Bagshot’s decaying corpse, fangs glinting, muscles tense and aching. Her scales shimmer and pulse, coil and unwind. She is Pandora’s box unleashed into the world, spilling out and taking control.

They run, but the stairs are too steep, escape too far away.

Draco prods the snake with his wand. Her tail whips out and sends him crashing into the wall. Hermione Levitates a chair and aims it at a swaying, slippery head. Nagini smoothly avoids it and lunges for her throat.

Harry, he… he…

He wonders what other sacrifices must be made to survive.

He remembers red hair and freckled hands, a final promise made upon a dying breath.

He shoves Hermione to the side just before Nagini's fangs clamp down on pulsing skin. The effect is immediate; the venom spreads through his veins and clouds his vision with white mist. When he opens his eyes, King's Cross is glistening clean and abnormally empty.

Dumbledore is waiting for him. He does not argue when Harry refuses to stay.

"Take me back. I have to go back."

"As you wish, my dear boy." His old headmaster's eyes twinkle behind half-moon spectacles.

The mist fades away, and then there is Draco, hovering above him, feeding a potion down his throat, Hermione at his side. He notices the bloody Sword of Gryffindor gripped in Hermione's hands.

"Did you kill it?"

Hermione's grip tightens, mouth set into a grim line. "The snake is dead."

"Good," says Harry.

"And you're not," says Draco, looking him over critically.

"I'm…" Harry coughs, struggles to sit up as lethargy tries to push him down.

"Why aren't you? That should have killed you."

"I… I don't know." That is the truth, even if Draco does not want to hear it.

"Well, don't do it again," he says and gets up, abandoning Harry on the floor.

"C'mon." Hermione yanks him up by the armpits. "We need to go."

As they step outside, Harry grabs Draco's hand. Draco squeezes it tightly and does not let go.

~ Present Day: August 2001 ~

Harry stares up at the slanted ceiling, patched with grey and ringed with smoke. Sunlight filters through the curtains, lights up the specks of dust floating in place, held frozen in time. Draco's body beside him is warm—too warm—sweat dampening the sheets and trickling across his brow. Still, Harry pulls him closer and holds him in his arms.

Draco sighs in his sleep and settles into Harry's hold.

Harry presses his nose into Draco's hair, taking deep, even breaths. He wishes they could stay like that, the world swirling around them but not touching them. He wishes the war would be over, so that he could live a normal life, whatever normal means.

He hears footsteps in the hallway right before the door springs open and Hermione's dishevelled head appears in the frame. Her hair is squished on one side, puffy on the other. There are deep bags under her eyes and a tremor in her hands. Harry has the inexplicable flash of an image of a mad scientist standing over his inhuman creation.

“I think I found it.”

Draco stirs in the bed, head craning up to peer blearily at Hermione. “Found what?”

“A way to kill him. To destroy the last Horcrux—without having to find it, without him knowing.”

“How?” Harry says.

“A spell. Simple, yet Dark. I’m going to need your help.”

He and Draco glance at each other, an immeasurable moment passing between them. They both sit up fully in the bed, rubbing their eyes and double-checking that the sheets are still covering the most important bits.

Harry takes Draco’s hand.

“Tell me,” he says.

So, Hermione tells them.

End Notes

The movie that the Dursleys watch is *127 Hours* which was released in 2010, so we're just gonna ignore that they definitely wouldn't be watching it back in the late '80s.

Thank you for reading 💕!! Don’t forget to check out JuliusTwo’s amazing artwork as well!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!